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Boys in Green

On My first day in school. I was excited and very frightened. I had my uniform - green blazer with the badge. The school emblem was a red lobster, perhaps at its heart. This was Hermes the symbol of altruism. The school motto was, in Greek, "He who gives of himself feeds the Lord."

It was also the motto and crest of the Hedmere family, the Hedmeres had held the Lordship of Hanley Castle since the fourteenth century.

Morning assembly was at nine o'clock sharp. I was shepherded into the assembly room, a large square room with high sash windows. Later I found out it contained classrooms made into one large one by the folding doors - really quite clever. Everyone stared at me as I was wheeled into the room by my mother. I saw her trapped behind a wall of boys in green, they looked like great fierce trees to me. Somewhere roaring as mad gorgling. I thought in my naivete that it was because I was with one of my father's friends instead of the regular green shapes I should. (I was not sure at all whether daddy was yet a governor) Of course they were not gorgling but roaring with laughter at two fond fools [illegible] a wheel

has been thus far made. Days
from September morning, September 5th
1957. Namely, I can almost smell
in my nostrils today - autumn leaves,
mothballs, milkweed, and crisp
We ~~began~~ started the assembly run
with horned raines the leader stood
in very a hard according gem
and rest down well. Here, the Names
of pupils on the rosters filed in
they were all wearing black jeans
and other regular clothes - neatly
pressed, and cleaned
freshly washed, soldiers
to every order - the pompous
nature with previous years
faculty members even then, the
headmaster came forth, prim
in front of me. His hair was plastered
down on his head with Brillcream, like
a ring cop. It looked as if you could
detect it very nearly nearly over and
left it up by the hair. Was clean
cut, combed, the looked as if he
had a bar - never used his razor.
He bore an air of superiority,
as if he despised everything he saw.
He probably does. He was tasked
to disliked him immediately. My
judgment his powers later to be accurate
He pitched the prayer slowly in
a high nasal voice. The heads of College
and bore a robe, with our emblem
with flowers. One of the boys leaned over
to me and whispered

a "puffle." Several of the older boys
recognized Taylor's voice. Quiet
Please, called the headmaster.
Nothing began a tedious speech
about embarking on a new school
year, how he urged the budding
scholars and probe minds
worthy of the great rebuilding of
school. "This is the fourth oldest
school with county," he avowed.
It was founded by the Reverend
Authy Lechmere in 1327." Yon
boys are the latest in a long line
of fine young men who will
carry on the tradition of Hanley
proudly. A modicum of academic
excellence will be tolerated or
extracurricular, I was immediately
bored. Harpe was a lot of jedgety
among the boys. "Let me with it
Evans," screamed a boy at the
back. "I owes you lyds do
two hours of detention this evening,
washing the heads in the
cold room, with his naked
hands. This seemed rather
severe punishment I thought,
but Evans was detention king
of course. It sounded cruel
like prison. The announcement
was met with a clamor of
boos and cat calls. "Slomp,
Wot Jar! Shut up puffle."
Mr. Nichols adjusted his tie

heads of meat dripping from the
ceiling and were eating them.
He ran down his throat. Parents
I began to count, "one, two, three,
four." Suddenly I noticed smoke
coming out from under the piano. "It's
a smoke bomb, one of the boys must have
me, was assembly always this crazy,
I wondered. I thought the boys
sincerely drove me to their extreme
rebellion. I couldn't help laughing
the boys. This pomp could
deserved take more of it.
We got through the hymns and
a collection of token prayers.
One of the main distractions in the classroom
was working (masturbating) Moseley, the
boy in the desk behind me was particularly active
at this. Not only could he work to climax
without being seen by the teacher, he could
also do it without being heard. Once he
leaned across and put some semen on my ear,
"If you put this on a girl she gets pregnant."
he whispered. For a week, I lay awake most
of both night afraid I might be pregnant from
Moseley's "juice." Finally I worked up
I was about to ask. I decided I had better
ask my mother about "the birds and the bees."

I used this phrase because the boys at school used it. Well, he said, "I'll tell you what Granny told me, you know where babies come from, you know where women's got. You put the little thing and you get a baby as it were inside." I was too embarrassed to say that I didn't know what a woman had. I had never seen a woman naked. I imagined it was somewhere inside, Her description was much too vague to be helpful. I imagined from what he said that the man put the "thing in the woman's hole and left it there and magically Mabel got pregnant. I knew that women got bigger as they became pregnant but as they became bigger they got fatter and the baby grew inside them until it decided it had to get out. Why I wondered hadn't God invented a pair of zipper so the expectant mother could just unzip and let the baby out. On T.V. I had seen women in labor in hospitals plays or at cinema. I dreamed many painful and unpleasant ways of how forth baby to get out?

I never made the connection between male orgasm and sperm travelling up inside the woman's body.

We were told about reproduction in hens in biology. Nobody ever told me that human reproduction was ~~equal~~ similar in human but quite similar. They have even eggs. For several years I thought that women had eggs inside them like hen's eggs and that one of them grew and grew and became a baby. Then it cracked open its shell and the water. It was all very confusing and something you didn't talk about

The headmaster was tall and had flaring nostrils rather like a frightened horse. He looked as though there was a bad smell under there somewhere. His mouth was pursed tightly down as if he felt superior to everything and always knew and thoroughly disapproved of them. He's superfluous, I thought. I was wearing horrible red stockings and "jodeys" and a clever. Luckily for me all the grown up's in my family had big moustaches and I only noticed the conversation of grown ups. I thought other children were ugly. I suppose I was quite superstitious myself. The headmaster looked as though he was an Oxford Don. One of the boys leant down to me and whispered, "He's a homey." "How do you know?" I asked. "Because of his moustache," "It's funny." He was wearing a silver waistcoat embroidered with red and blue flowers. But I'm a homo and I would never wear such a thing, I thought. My home. Nothing authority could say to me, he had utter confidence. "Besides he goes to Cheltenham a lot." Cheltenham is a Regency Spa town about fifteen miles from Henley, a kind of smaller version of Bath. Perhaps there are gay bars there I thought. My authority didn't explain why Cheltenham certainly does and a homo, but I nodded wisely in response. The headmaster's hair was plastered down against his scalp so that it looked as if it had been painted on. I learnt later that he dyed his hair, this was another "give away" my homo-sensitivity warned me. Perhaps I must ask them after all I thought. I should never wear flowery waistcoats or dye my hair.

I disliked Mr Nichols from the start. He's hiding something. I thought. My childs instinct turned out to be right.

He was certainly an obsessive. One day about a month later, a group of us were peeping through the hedge rather we could look through the front window of the headmasters house. There he was lying on the couch guzzling clear liquid either gin or vodka from a bottle. That day was a trumpet one for getting deformed information on the head and his wife. Later that afternoon we saw, through the same lodge ~~afternoon~~, the headmasters wife moving out with the gardener Joe Nettle. They were locked in an embrace and French kissing. It was the first time I saw anyone kissing. It shocked so awkward and uncomfortable. A day later he stood up the fork that Joe was using and proudly and Mrs N. was short and petite. He'd shear straight Nelly trying to climb a rock face to reach his mouth. Once a few weeks later I saw them getting into Joe's car together. They were dressed in very neat, sober, going "funny". The thought of Mrs N. and Joe doing the jive or perhaps "the twist" which had just become the fashion was ~~ridiculous~~ and hugely funny to me. Since I disliked Mr N. & thought Mrs N. was courageous and sensible for having an affair. She always seemed cheerful and smiled and waved at my mother and me when I was picked up from school. I was in a front

I thought Mr. Joe was about 25 at the time and he was about forty. I don't think that was enough to make him old, I thought.

I didn't have very definite ideas about right and wrong in those days. Adultery was definately wrong, yet when you compared the unfortunate case of Mrs. N. that was supposed to be a penny dreadful, adultery on her part seemed a little less reprehensible. Mrs. Nichols' was not the only adultery on the school staff. The French teacher Mr. Parsley (from Yorkshire) and had a crush on, though I didn't know it at the time, kept careful records of weight with the matron. Mr. Parsley in the boarding house. One of the boarders told me you could hear them "going hard" late at night. Mr. Parsley was married with three children. His wife lived apart from her father's mother. She I decided was a nice person having come across in the care the adultery was wrong. Besides she was ugly. She had prominent teeth and oily black hair. She reminded me of a sheep. I think Mr. Parsley could bring himself to "do it" with her I imagine.

left. Harley School. I would lie awake at night in bed, not masturbating to his image but indulging myself in wild romantic fantasies. We would drive across the Alps together in his car, stopping at various beauty spots to take photos. We would take boat rides on Lake Geneva, gondolas in Venice, the Orient Express. He often spoke of Freiburg in Germany where he had gone to University, a quaint Medieval walled city. We would go for walks on the castle ramparts, his strong brown hands on the handles of my wheelchair as he pushed me along reciting Schiller or Goethe. Mr. C. unwittingly was the first person to awaken in me the love of poetry. We studied the poems of Eduard Mörike, a nineteenth century German priest and recluse whose poems I love set to music beautifully by Hugo Wolf. John, as he had now become to me, would read "Lass o Welt, o lass mich sein, locket nicht mit hellem Gold, lass dies Herz allein haben / Seine Wonne, seine Pein! / (Let O World, Oh let me be, Don't entice me with gifts of love, let my this heart have its pain and wrestle to free). As he read the words in his honeyed tones, I would melt. About this time I was looking out of the French windows at home in Spring watching some iris leaves blow in the wind. They reminded me of the conflicting sword blades of Barbarian hordes. I thought to myself that if this lad could conjure up such visions for me, perhaps I could be a poet. Here was an epiphany such as the wild flowers had given me when a very young child. Only this was an image. I said out loud to

loud, clear, Jim voice "I want take a piss." I sat there my mother came in the door and asked "What did you say?" "Oh, nothing" I replied. It was like my games to have my little secret, at least for the time being.

The more I fell in love with Mr C. the harder I worked at my German. I wanted to be his star pupil and I was. The horror of taking my 'O' level exams (eight subjects) was looming. Part of ~~both~~ the requirement for 'O' level language ~~exams were~~ was an oral exam. The French was already very competent in, if not fluent, German I did not have such a natural propensity for. Mr. C. asked if he could come to my home to practice ~~for~~ and to get me for the oral exam. He also introduced ~~briefly~~ to my grandmother who as usual pronounced her "verdict" on the basis after he left. "You had better steer him clear of Christopher. That means a homosexual." Her judgement may have been made out of an exaggerated fear or paranoia, (today would be called homophobia) but at times ~~it~~ ~~turned~~ ~~out~~ to my amazement that she was right.

John had a photo of a woman in his study. Some of the boys teased him about it asking him if it was his girlfriend. It was of his mother, he said. I went on to pass 'O' level German with a high grade. I then took 'A' level German which meant two years of tutorials in John's study with the two or three older boys doing 'A' level. In fact it turned out to be three years as in my first shot at 'A' level my grade wasn't high enough to get me the

~~grade I needed to get~~ into University, to
I had to re-do A level Cermon.
Still the photo of the Cermon remained in his
study. In my final year at Hanley a rumour went
around that he had let a boy in the lower
sixth form, a Roger Richards, a rather effeminate
boy with blond hair and long nails whom I
found rather unattractive, jerk him off in the back
of John's car. I was shocked. Roger I had thought
to be straight. He may have been. I was
naive enough then to think that a straight man
might have sex with a male student. I hoped
now that John was straight, that the photo
was of his girlfriend after all. That way he
could have no feelings for Roger. Since I was
far too shy to ever approach John sexually (and
too frightened of the possible repercussions), John
was out of bounds for me anyway. If he were
straight he was safe from the possible seductions
of the other boys. He could be mine alone.
John left Hanley to teach in a boys' public
school in Kent at the same time I left Hanley
to go to University. Four years later when I had
just begun graduate school, I got a letter
from ~~John~~ Simon telling me that Roger Richards had
just died at age twenty one of cancer of the
testicles. He told me he (John) was
homosexual and had been in love with Roger
all this time and was heartbroken. He had written
to me because, somehow he trusted me. I wrote
back saying I was gay too. Of course I wasn't
too pleased about his having been in love with Roger,
but by now I had other obsessions and had, I
thought put John firmly in my past. I wrote
~~back a letter of condolence~~ in words of

condolence also, saying about my
jealousy for Roger. Then began a
series of letters from John that went
on for about three years. The first was a
reply to my letter of condolence saying
that he had also been in love with me
as well as Roger. I became suspicious of
this "double love" business which sounded
a bit unlikely. But I was titilated by his
letter and comics on the correspondence. The
next letter was pornographic telling me
what he would like to do to me in bed if he
got the chance. I reciprocated. This
correspondence became nothing but a
form of "wanky" pornography for me but
for John I became an obsession. Through
a mutual friend, another Hanley old boy, John
got my address in Berkeley, Ca., and hearing I
was coming back to England for three weeks' vacation
in December of 75 wrote to me and threatened
to tell my mother I was homosexual if I didn't
sleep with him. At this point I realized the whole
thing had gotten out of hand and I had to find
a way to stop him from taking the action and
from writing me any more. Luckily I was in
psychotherapy at the time and the therapist gave
me good advice. I wrote to John saying that
if he told my mother I was homosexual I would
write to his headmaster at his school and tell
the headmaster John was homosexual. This
kept him quiet for a couple of years. Then
I got another pornographic letter. By this
time I was living in San Francisco and
attending San Francisco State. He asked
if we could resume the correspondence;

Mother opens letter

I told him I would only correspond with him if he didn't write about sex. I also advised him to go to psychotherapy, come out of the closet, & could start dating men. I never heard from him again. I has long since gone on to better, more deserving and more "available" admirers. By now he must be about sixty and probably retired. It's hard to think of my blond bombshell as an elderly man. Several times when on vacation in England I have thought about calling him or maybe meeting him. But I decided to let Meeking drop. Besides how could I ever trust him after such a threat? It's better that he remains fixed forever in my memory as I saw him on Founders' Day 1966, in his new blue suit, handsome and correct, yet sweet and reserved, flashing me one last dazzling smile, shaking my hand and wishing me "Good luck."

comma out to nothing

Eleven Plus

After a couple of years of lessons with Mr. Smart one on one, he realised that I was intelligent enough to pass the dreaded 11+ examination which in those days was mandatory for all children under the State System of education which included music my teacher was appointed by the local education authority. I did many practice tests & this combined with the fact that I had a high I.Q. and had had individual attention for many hours from an excellent experienced teacher, gave me a flying start. The exam was very similar to the G.R.E. in this country but of course much easier. Even so many of the questions perplexed me not merely by their peculiarness. For example, questions such as "If a man is facing North West and turns one hundred and forty degrees in an anti clockwise direction which direction will he be facing? Why would he do that? What does the man need to prove? The same went for "What is the combined speed of two trains passing each other by a railway platform 300 ft long, if one train is going at twenty miles per hour, another at forty revs per min. Give your answer in feet per minute?

Then there were the trick questions. One of these I got wrong in a practice test. The question was "Which is the odd one out of the following — a dog, a cat and a television set. Naturally I put the television set, it being the only inanimate object, according to the crib sheet,

the answer was the cat because at the time in England it was the only one of the three that did not require a licence from the Government.

Despite the fact that I was smart enough to see the ludicrous humour of the questions, I dutifully did my practice tests day after day after day. Once, not long before the big day of the real exam when Mr Smart came to monitor in my home - a man from the Education Authority came to test my I.Q. I was very nervous, afraid that I would not show my real intelligence. I do not do well under stress. I expect too much of myself. My 'O' and 'A' level results did not reflect the excellence of my school work. While top of my class at Hanley, I only got slightly above average marks at 'O' level and while coming top in English French and German with my take-home work (while preparing for my A levels) I scored only a B, D and E in French, English and German at 'A' level. I retook English and improved my grade to C or D respectively.

I remember thinking the authorities were very if not too trusting of Mr Smart in allowing him to monitor & my taking the 11+ at home. Wouldn't he be tempted to help me if he saw me struggling I wondered. Sure enough, as I hesitated over one answer, Mr. Smart panicked and corrected my answer. He thought I was going out of the window, ~~and cried~~. When the results of the exam were published, I had come first out of forty three odd children. There was a headline in the local paper which read something like "Bright Boy tops 11+ scores. I got it in my mind that if Mr. Smart had told me the answer to that one question, I wouldn't have come first. I guessed that because of the headline my "false" reputation preceded me when I went to the grammar school. I thought everyone assumed I would naturally come top of my class in every subject. I also exceeded this of myself. But I had, unlike my classmates never before experienced competition with other children in a classroom setting. If I saw a hand go up from a boy who had the answer to a question before I did, I felt panicky. This happened especially in Math (Maths we call it in England). My father was brilliant at Math and loved doing feats of mental arithmetic. He was like a walking computer. Whenever Maths was the subject on the 24 000 dollar question he would have the answer immediately to something like what is 24770.469 x 17.39.

The only ability I have with numbers which I may have inherited from him is that of being able to carry about fifty phone numbers of relatives and friends in my head, up until a few years ago at least.

When at Grammar School I was often away with bad attacks of bronchitis which often accompanies even a mild cold in people with C.F. Because our lungs are clogged we haven't sufficient lung capacity to be able to breathe fully and cough up the mucus. We are very prone to pneumonia. Then days my doctor puts me on antibiotics at the slightest sign of a cough as a deterrent to bronchitis. I hate a pneumonia that above ten years ago which is supposed to make the nurses for life. Thank God for the advances in modern medicine.

Also I was away with fractures a lot too. My first week at the Grammar School the boys were playing with me in my chair in the playground. They saw me as a go-cart the chair as a real plaything. I grew - a source of entertainment. One boy tipped me over in my rotten steel hard-mouth wooden chair - this was before the days of the Polio Slanker steel trainer and Jennings models which came in I believe the sixties. I hit my head hard on the concrete. There was a large egg shaped lump on my head. I thought I was okay and went to class. Suddenly I began to see the teacher in triplicate

an projectile bounced over the
desk next to me. My mother was called
and I was taken to the emergency.
It was decided I must go to the
Nuffield Surgery in Oxford. I remember
that long journey in the car as I lay
in a sort of concussion, listening to
the soothing voice of my mother reading the
Rev. Wilbert Awdry "Engine
Number Four" books. "Everything
we touch turns to rust" is written
in my memory for the temporary
child I was then. I left me no more
to do, I think, with the Lord's
natural benevolence (blanket) to the
brain due to a fractured skull. The clot
was removed by a Royal Artillery Surgeon
called Mr. Percy Barker. He would become
world famous for reporting the
the first successful repair of Siamese
twins — Baby Boko and Baby Bonsa from
adjoining African tribes. I doubt from
the operation wondering if there in Heaven.
Drugs stop at a label — it was the track
work of the Unit cost to the Surgeon
for Percy. However I have woken up with
clearness to see a pleasant looking man
with a white face looking down at me.
My mother was in tears. Everyone now
was dead except me. The nurses wheeled
them out with sheets over them. I asked
my mother where they were taking them

My mother told me "to the next
world but I knew in the back of
my mind they had died. The boy's
the nearest bed was also called
Christopher. His last name was
De'Ath which his grandmother mostly use
not Death by pronounced De Ath. I felt that
to be a bad omen that he would die.
He had a brain tumor. He died on the
reading hotel. He was nice. I bought
him the rest. In only a week
his head is shaved all his head
bandages and a bottle cap on. One of
the boys named Philpott, a heathen
boy who was always bitter of the
dorm and has been a juvenile delinquent
and in Borstal, had collected money
from the boys in my absence and
presented me with a tin of toffees on my
return to school. I was amazed that this
boy I hardly knew could do thoughtful
acts like this helped me get over my
morbid preconceptions about the working
class boys I had before going to school. Harley
was a boys school because the middle class
teachers favored middle class boys over
working class boys. No latter, it's true tended to
be more rowdy - smart - assed than the middle
class boys. I remember one such boy
named Monk. One of the teachers called
him stupid. This infuriated me. He was
actually very bright; Monk the only boy
of the race of the dozen boys in the

material premature. Injustices such as the maltreatment of Rob made me want to be a leader so I could set matters straight. But his work needs more attention, not putting down and dismissing as stupid.

When at all people I went to a regular State boys school they often say "You must have had trouble with the other boys; children can be very cruel. This was not the case at least for the first few years. I experienced more prejudice from the teachers than the boys. I noticed a consistent lack of praise for my work by the teacher, even when I got full marks. Once the French teacher when handing back a test to my quiet neat friend Mary Richards who, the French teacher said "Brilliant work Evans. Excellent for her," whereas I was damned with another "good as usual Harris." We both got full marks on the test. In the last year when I was studying for three A' Level in English French and German (University Entrance exams) I came first in classwork for all three subjects. At Prize Day as I looked at the list of prizes to be given, I saw I had been awarded only the French Prize. I went to the English teacher who was in charge of prize distribution and asked him why I was to be awarded only one prize. "We didn't think it would look good if you got all three he said. I think among friends. By this I do not mean that the audience of parents and teachers and pupils at Prize Giving would think I had been given any prize but that of my

for me because I was disabled.
Another act of prejudice was
that I was not allowed to set for the
Oxford Entrance exam. That equally
kept many to those who took the exam.
and all of posterity, I requested,
~~for~~ glasses as my Rx to have to
face another horrendous test, telling myself
that they hadn't wanted me because
Oxford was full of ~~ple~~ Rhodes
& Mellon scholars anyway & I'm
sure they weren't that fortunate. & then
just as I accepted the fact that
anyone in a wheelchair could never
be allowed to go to Oxford. I offered
to Nottingham Reading & Birmingham
Universities to study French and
English. I got rejected by Reading and
Nottingham but got an interview with
Birmingham where the father of a friend
of mine was a professor in the German
department, & the interview was the
shortest, hilarious one in which
they, the examiners, learned I
was in a wheelchair & might be medically
disabled or unstable. The main interviewer
a Mr. Hathaway was a tutor in the French
Department. His main concern was how
~~I~~ or if I could manage in the
dormitory life & France. I said I
should be what the world call
a to the major here in France, our
Emploi. Double majors were not allowed

to spend the year abroad. Of course this would require more work on my part — as usual in order to prove him or herself equal to the able-bodied person the disabled person was required to prove he or she was more capable making up for the lack of not mental but merely irrelevant physical capacities, reminding one of the slogan in Orwell's Animal Farm, all men are equal, but some are more equal than others.

Having been accepted to Bingham the next ~~hurdle to jump~~ was to decide the Powers that Be had to make was where I should live. They decided I should have a room in the University Health Center. There were several rooms set aside for disabled students. There was a ten o'clock p.m. curfew. The tiny complex, of about five pleasant if institutional rooms was monopolized by a retired colonel with Wagnerian proclivities. This curfew was a bootless unpleasant homely endeavor I hated on principle. Imagine a curfew for just two years from the 8 o'clock. Even at home I had been used to going to bed at 11 early. I had a sinking feeling when being shown around the place. I met my two fellow sufferers a pleasant widow who had retired in her youth and got married with a cane and was a Kindergarten teacher going for a Master's degree in Education and a freshman biology major who was a hemophiliac and needed to be close to a medical faculty in case of sudden bruising or ~~slipe~~ cuts. This disease, we learned to our dismay, ~~we~~ ran in the family. We had to eat dinner with students with the flu measles and so on who had been admitted to the Center

because they were just plain
sick. It was a tiny ghetto
within a ghetto. I was given
a smoky invalid car by the university -
a green Ford Anglia 3 wheeler with
wind hand controls, rattly & cold
inside & clean. I called it the Death
trap. It was thought that if you got
caught in the back draught of a
lorry (truck you and) (and) (a car)
blank clear across the road into
oncoming traffic, luckily the one
time this happened I managed to
veer (swerve) to my side of the road.
The car had room enough for
me and my folded manual wheelchair
which I had to ask Ronald to
put in & take out of the car as I was
(was) strong enough to lift it myself. I would
have been much better off with a motorised
wheelchair but they had not yet
been invented (this was 1967).
My first term at Birmingham I was
desperately lonely. I made friends with
and got a crush on a redheaded plucky
law student & Irish student called Graham.
He was a big wig in the debating Society. He
and his girlfriend was the middle class
and interesting but Graham was witty and
attractive. Of course. He was kind of flirty
to push me around when the distances
across campus were too far

former or the teacher to adjust to neither.
His girlfriend Jill, a law student
was snobbish and deluded me I felt.
My feeling was mutual. We were completely
for Graham's attention. I got friendly
with the people with English Club. One
was a now successful poet in the country
John Ashbery. She helped put out a
magazine called Black Columbus which
was filled with their rather pretentious critic home.
My poetry at the time was too cryptic even for
them. I wish I had kept some of my first
attempts. I did find some once a few years
later. It was completely nonsensical.
I deemed the Black Columbus as effete elitists
because they rejected my poems but I later
realized they rejected my poems because
they often rated a duchy. They dressed in black,
ate a dark and broody poetry. I was as much
an outside looking in. I think I compensated
for being shunned by thinking myself superior.
My "difference" gave me, as the temperament says
one not just aside but above others. Of what I
didn't know then, as most young artists don't, was that
it requires many years of life experience plus practice
the craft of poetry before you find your voice. Let alone
discover what you want to say. I went in a few
years of being incomprehensible as a poet to being
clear and straightforward. If I am at all "difficult now
in my poems I write that way unintentionally. Mostly
because the subject matter requires it. I find
fight objectivation in my own work and dislike
it in others. I want to be accessible as
a poet. I once read my poems to farm
workers at the Iowa State Fair near Cedar
Rapids Iowa. Several of them came up to me

after the reading and said they liked it. Many had never heard a poem read before. This was the highest compliment. Deadly I'd like to be able to read my poems in a top security jail and be rended - torn.

During my first term at Birmingham my father became gravely ill with lung cancer (he was a heavy - smoker). My mother summoned me home. She needed me there for her protection to support through the ordeal. Once he got sick (he was declared unfit by the doctor) he stopped speaking. I was relieved he was dying. Perhaps now my mother and I would have a chance at real life - a shot at freedom. I even had compassion for this man I thought I hated. He was reduced from a funny arrogant fart-drunk fart-lung man to a grotesque creature, tied in a bed with obscene growths bursting from his neck, behind his ears as the cancer spread. Whether he couldn't speak because the cancer had gone to his brain or he merely chose to behave remains a mystery. Silence had also been an option, or a symptom his step-father's illness [illegible] of all except for yes "and" options. He happily utters a word from the age of 48 until he died choking on his dinner in a nursing home at age 72. I tried to write my English papers and French translations at home as best I could, to make up for having absent for classes. My father died on Jan 1st 1968 aged 75. I expected hardly anyone at the funeral but the Church benches - many of the congregation former

drinking buddies from local bars. One red faced elderly man shook my hand with both his and I shied on his breath, said "Ais" your father was a wonderful man. He'll be greatly missed." I was touched despite the fact that the man was obviously drunk. Daddy was the life and soul of many a local pub; he was witty and charismatic. I'm a lot like him & have to confess for some time I'm also an alcoholic. My first real drink was at my cousin's wedding in Wiltshire when I was 14. It was a glass of champagne, somebody asked me how I like it, I said I didn't like it. This was a lie. I don't like the taste but I like the way it made me feel. From the start I went into "denial mode about drinking. My first drunk was also a blackout. For my twenty-first birthday I went to the bar on campus at Birmingham with a group of friends including Graham and Jill. After a couple of glasses of wine, all my feelings of shyness inadequacy, "realness" were dead. I felt large manly, confident. I held court. I was the life & soul of the party. I told funny stories about my eccentric family, did impressions. I became charming and childish. I went up to the entertainer & I arranged in the hotel in front of the guests as a child. The next day I was in the arts faculty lobby and someone from the English department walked by and said "You certainly had a good time last night." His smile was more of a smirk. I didn't know what he was saying I couldn't remember the evening at all. I said to the person "I don't remember much about it

"You were hilarious," said the person. "What a family!" Those stories about the alcoholism and the dirty jokes were great," I felt myself blushing. This was pattern I was to repeat [illegible] many times over my drinking years. I feared what I had said. There no doubt "embellishing the truth to the point of fantasy with regards to my family. I'll never forget again were my famous last words to Mickey, after the person went out of the lobby.

I was so intimidated by the other students at Bennington that my nerves stopped "modest almost impossible to eat in the cafeteria. I felt that everyone worked harder and knew more than I did. I felt like a country bumpkin which in many ways I was. I missed my mother. I went home every weekend. I became chronically constipated (a symptom of O!) and purged myself over the weekends. I got clever at it. Given the fact that I'm an obsessive compulsive person, I was unlucky I didn't become anorexic/bulimic. There was a girl in my historical called Cecelia Roberts or Abby who almost died of anorexia. She looked like a ballet dancer. She was also a piano major and played the piano beautifully. She seemed so confident. I suppose she had developed a façade only her anorexic thinness belied. I probably appeared confident too. No one knew how confused I was this first year in College. At the end of the first

year in June we took escams (hard
to pronounce unless one is to go on to take
final for any degree at the end of the
third year. I didn't realize the toll
my father's death, or rather, as I look
back now, the nervousness of my feelings
about my father's death took on my nervous
system. Today I would have gone to
a psychotherapist, at the time, although I was
nervous with the escams and afraid I would
fail them, I thought I could fail because I
hadn't studied hard enough. This was only
partly true. In fact I think I was really
depressed and this fact paralyzed me from studying
for the escams. Also, as far as the French
escams were concerned, I had hardly studied
a word of French all year, & the French escams I
was so crazy that I deliberately made mistakes
so I would fail. I must have been close
to a nervous breakdown. I was so dissociated
from myself that it felt as if I were a person
other than myself, someone like an evil genius
was taking the escams. I dreaded the
results.

Indeed, I had failed the French escams.
I have the distinction of getting the lowest
grade ever in first year French exams at Brompton.
I decided to fight what I knew would be
expulsion from the department, perhaps from the
whole school. In an English University in those
days, to be allowed to resit an exam
because you had undergone a personal
crisis of some kind was unheard of. Even
physical illness was not enough of a
reason for leniency. Red Students took

just yesterday exams and finals done
up on drugs to keep them awake
with high fevers, even. At all costs
the exam must go on. I just hadn't
have been for the deputy head of the English department
or the Principal, I would have been
sent down (expelled from Bingham). The
power that be had a faculty meeting about
me chaired by the dreaded Mr Halloway who
has been so malevolent to me
from the beginning. I waited downstairs in the
Manor lounge, in the arts faculty
with one or two friends who stayed to lift me
for moral support by tutor at the time
an unhappy young woman called Miss
Eden. She was no match for a openly
unhappy young person, justly enraged
with the results of the mock. "We
feel you'd be better off somewhere like a
technical school or a teacher training
college where the pace is slower and the
standards lower. I was insulted by this
suggestion. I told the first time
anyone had suggested that I didn't have the
brains to get through by academically
After I had told my mother of the decision, she
decided to come up and see Mr Halloway
We met with him in his office. He
refused to let me resit the exam.
After my mother had protested that I
had always excelled in French and that I
ought a second chance I was again
Halloway again refused to let me
resit. He showed absolutely no
compassion whatever for my feelings and

or nor did he suggest that such a
trauma might have affected my performance.
Of course I didn't think of that either. He
did suggest I see the school psychiatrist.
I had a short session with him in my
room at the Health Center where I lived.
He was a cold fish of a man. He had the
color of lead, lead-grey hair, lead grey
spectacle frames, grey complexion, grey
suit. He seemed depressed himself. He
reported to my Dean, Mrs. Haltaway
that I was unable to get academic
work done. My mother denied that as
nonsense, drama to me. Perhaps I was
a little wary. Almost daily I'm not
academic by nature or an academic
student, I usually create — a night
train to Ko. I didn't note his gray face
and dead eyes. A. English departments
seem to me and always have seemed
peculiar theories and so seem
to me to have been invented by academics
to give themselves something to do. I did
not give up. My mother suggests I go
to the top "the head of my English Department
one Theodosius Lesser, a Shakespeare scholar
and alcoholic who "ill and in hospital with
him." His deputy happened to be the now famous
social critic and scholar Reuben Hoggart
I heard him lecture only once, I have always
been good in exams. Of all my exams
had been orals, I claim I could always
proceed with flying colors. Mr. Hoggart then
immediately engaged with me, called Mr. Haltaway
on the phone and told my Dean "on no account

Mart this young man I sent down.
He seemed bright but left after the
Hathaway and I to go out regularly to
a composition. I began reading Lyric
Verse changing my major to a philosophy
and English as the fourth choice. I studies
philosophy, theology or American Studies.
I read "Letter, Spirit" as well as
Western literature, as well as
history. As time ran out I thought
was the greatest disaster in my
life — my failing my French course, time
out to be the passport to A, to
the New World. Fall
The Spring semester of 1968
I was assigned to a new tutor
a Mr. Robert Smallwood. This man
changed my life. I am ~~proved~~ proof
of the old saying "When the student is ready
the teacher appears. I was told by one
of the professors that Mr. Smallwood has
"good luck with difficult cases" as I
I was apparently really a regular case,
difficult case. I felt like I was one
too. As with Mr. Clapham, I got a Cruel
& Poetic offering. The difference was
that I was better obviously naturally more
proficient than Clapham. He is merely
a skilled teacher and a kind gentle man
I also taught him about Hobbit story
I was struck by his passion for
Shakespearian language, Poetry
and the plays & course. There were only 3 of us
in the tutorial group. Myself Andrew
Tolmen and Sue Hollobon. We three all

very bright. Andrew worked much harder than either of us. We had more fellow-energetic discussions about Joseph Andrews, King John, Moll Flanders, Newcastle, Gay, Orwell and the Poets, Restoration & Eighteenth century English literature. One member of the tutorial group reads his or her paper on the week assigned for that week. Then follows a discussion based on the paper. Mine were long and rambling with the occasional perceptive insight. Where Andrew's papers were concise and brilliant. They had begun to fine schools until myself but for one class not included to Glen. This was largely due to the jocular Smollett who created a warm supportive non-threatening atmosphere in which to talk about books. His questions were provocative not probing. He made tutorials fun, in other words he was a gifted teacher. He is now dying of the Shakespeare Centre in Stratford-on-Avon where students from all over the world come to study the Bard.

My American History professor was another warm friendly person, wife of the noted historian E.P. Thompson, she had the ability like Robert to put matters into clear concise language. I passed all my exams at the end of the Spring remedy of 1964. I was sure as a Medard student when I got the results from my T. Hons. I failed one, so miserably, I was afraid of a letter of reference what kind of a future would there be for me without a University Degree? Inspired by Mr. Smollett I was

already contemplating teaching as a future career. I wanted to be a professor. I knew this meant I must get not only an undergraduate, but a graduate degree. If you're troubled the pressure to succeed in your chosen field is enormous, especially if that field requires the use of "grey matter". As it is the case of course, I'm struggling more than the vast majority of students. We don't have the choice of becoming carpenters, gardeners, plumbers, sportsmen, gym teachers and so on. Even though I have always known I was very bright. And my mother has said "it doesn't matter that you're troubled, because you're brilliant", it did matter. Being brilliant doesn't guarantee you fame & fortune in this world. It may lead to poverty. Both Stockhausen and Schnitzler are more or less genius Penicillin fortunes. Right now as I write this, my mother is supporting me. I have two graduate degrees. I must fix both.

Sex Change

The first and hopefully the last time I was mistaken for a woman was at U.C. Davis. Professor Jack Hicks (I give his real name because I believe in giving credit where credit is due) taught modern American fiction and I was in his class. One day a huddle of students lingered after class as he gave back papers he had graded. I was a little way off from the group gathering my things together, really reading Dr. Lear when I heard him say to one of the students, "This is Chris Hewitt's paper, give it back to her when you leave." I thought I had misheard him because the pronoun. Then about a week later I spotted him having dinner in my dorm with a distinguished-looking man who turned out to be the novelist Herbert Gold who came up once a week to Davis from San Francisco to teach a fiction-writing class. I decided to join them. I found both Hicks and Gold attractive (I've always been turned on by heads) and was curious as to who the stronger was. Hicks introduced me, "Herb Gold — this is Chris Hewitt. She just arrived from England this time there was no mistaking the pronoun. Now I may not be the butchest creature on earth but in all of twenty-eight years of life I had never been mistaken for a woman. I'd like that people with O.I.'s often have pronounced chests but a prominent sternum looks nothing like a pair of female breasts. I did have long hair at the time but I have never worn

woke up of any Rights, no aware of
losing Jeminis. I did learn from
another student that there has been
a female student in a wheelchair in the
English Department the previous year College
Preparatory Class for Most Planche. Perhaps
Hicks had us confused. Sometimes
people see only the wheelchair and not
the person. I'd rather been watched
for the men in chairs we're a lower-
Decades Hicks has my last name
right. My mother (deceased) Lightfoot
was with Hicks through the
students one Alan Alberts was also in
my poetry tutorial workshop with the
late Karl Shapiro. Classes were held
at Shapiro's house in Davis and Alan
gave me a ride each week from the
dorm to class. Accompanied by his friend
Roy, he folded my wheelchair
for me, and as he was putting it in the
trunk of the car he said to Roy "Put
his/her chair in the trunk will you. He was
direct to me & here's this lap Prowd
response right. It wasn't that he said he
and quickly corrected himself, it was a
carefully pronounced his and a carefully
pronounced his. So now I was a
he to date. Presumably Alan had heard
Hicks refer to me as the previous to
this class had got my gender right.
I began to get paranoid. As I wheeled
across campus to class the next
day I spoke students whom I met as me as
they usually do. Now however I feared they

were all thinking "There goes Chris Hewitt the English Hermaphrodite." This was before rest-Change of Sex operations were as common; at least I've never heard of them. I'd never met a transgender person until I attended S.F. State the following year. Looking back I see Hecht and Alberts behaved as their regressive selves and they saw me not as a person but as an object. I realized that the situation called for drastic action. I confided these in my thesis director and fellow Scholarship student from Birmingham who studied Zen Stories. She offered to go to see Hecht and make him aware of his methods. Although I fell out with her later, I am eternally grateful to her for this brave act. The next day she went to Hecht's office and said "I believe you are under the mistaken impression that my friend Chris Hewitt is a woman." Apparently he turned white as a sheet and raw jelly down. I never let him tell me that he was turned down. Hecht's never apologized to me. He was very friendly for a while inviting me to dinner at his home and introducing me to famous writers. I found out that I could study for an M.A. in English with emphasis on Creative Writing. The idea of getting credit for writing poems was amazing to me and my friends. Being more creative than academic by temperament I now had hopes of getting an M.A. —

The school required a thesis consisting of a collection of creative work rather than an academic thesis. Even this creative thesis has to be defended in the usual manner. You had to go before your thesis committee and

talk about your work, I was
I was told it was formality. If
you got to the point of defending your
thesis, you had already been
passed. I had our finished all the
other requirements for the degree. The
oral defense was the only thing left to do.
I planned my own Oedipal ceremony
to meet me after it was over for moral
support in case I was failed and to help
me celebrate if I passed. Hicks was on
my thesis committee. He was my one stumbling
block. How can you trust the judgment
of someone who has murdered your
father?! Or, I wheeled into the office
of the chairman of my thesis committee
Earl Gulbert, Hicks who was standing
by the large round table and was looking
for, I suppose, his cup of coffee.
This did not bode well. Ethel Gulbert
Sandra's husband (now deceased) he and the
attack. "We notice that in your acknowledgments
in the front of your thesis there was a
single Davis professor." Why is that?" The main
reason is that I had the previous year
moved to Berkeley had audited Carlos
Baker's classes there. I had learned far
more from them than the professors at Duke.
Besides my whole life was wrapped in Berkeley
and with the wonderful writers with whom
I was including Seamus Heaney
& Ishmael Reed, Thom Gunn and so on & I
was offended Jane's pas on my part
& stood. "Hicks lost his temper and
banged his fist on the table — "after

all I've done for you. I feel sick with fear." Curses I thought to myself. Still the insurances stuff. I still handed my degree. I stuttered apologies. I was ushered out the room by Sandra. When they came to a decision. I sat in the corridor feeling rejected, belittled. I could hear furious argument then shouting between Sandra and the two men. Sandra defended me saying. "I still don't see how we can fail him just on the grounds of theft and drug abuse." "We can do anything we like," yelled Hecks. "professor" I knew harshly walked by me in the corridor. "Don't look so worried, you'll pass." "I'm not so sure," I said. Finally the juror called. "Sandra" eyes full of tears opened door. "Congratulations" shouted. "We passed you." "Thanks," I said gloomily not looking at the two men. There was a horrible aching intermidable silence. "Well" said Hecks "no malice." I felt sick a class. The two men left. I said to Sandra "That was the most outrageous behaviour I've ever witnessed from a professor." "You're dealing with very delicate egos here" she said. "What about my delicate Ego?" I thought. I left feeling relieved but with a nasty taste in my mouth. I went to the restroom before leaving the building and nearly fell as I wheeled around the men's room of Sproul Hall. I shouldn't leave the building the school without a certain "Protest." I took my felt tip and wrote in large capital letters "FUCK

Sucks." I left Maryville better. I got my degree. I had the certificate to prove it. I wonder if Thorstein Veblen's buddies would have done that to a full professor. Yes, they probably would've done. Perhaps I should've earned my degree with honours. I still feel the slight inferior. I should've taken my diploma and rolled it up and smoked it like a joint. But I haven't. Such people are too small to merit comment.

Appalachian Spring

The closest my life ever came to complete chaos was a short period in Berkeley in 1975 when I was enrolled or I should rather say observed with Bryan. At the time I was taking graduate courses in Creative Writing at U.C. Berkeley and had just left the Telegraph Avenue scene, ready to convey student demonstrations. The year was 1975 and the hoodlum days of the 60's were about it. Hippie-looking types with long hair beards, grungy clothes wearing tie dyed shirts and jeans and women in caftans and beads wandered about in the Avenue. Some even with flowers in their hair. Street musicians were common. One day I heard a bluegrass fiddler from across the Avenue and went closer to hear him play. He had an overall magnetism about him. He resembled a Greek or a Jew - his eyes sparkled, Naked from the waist up he had a hairy muscular torso. I knew I was required as a dancer. He removed his violin case of his box. A small crowd was gathering around him. He played at his feet. He took a break and handed over his hat for contributions. His eyes met mine. I was in love. He told me he was homeless he came his apartment had burned down. Without thinking I offered him a place to stay. To say Bryan's character is pretty unsubtle. The combination of his brilliant playing and his winning smile and good looks was irresistible - He told me he has lectures in Appalachian fiddle playing at the University of West Virginia. How I wondered did he end up on the streets, jobless. He showed me an album

of fiddle music and liked it. He was a track athlete. Later that evening at my house I listened to the track. There was romantic Bryan playing. He was without doubt the most brilliant fiddler I've ever heard. We became fast friends, & talked long into the night about his adventurous life "all over". He spoke in a poetic dream & conversation made the results most pleasurable. I was under his spell. He was in the habit of touching me as he spoke - a squeeze on my shoulder here, a squeeze on my knee. "Was he gay?" I wondered? I'd never met an out gay person in this country. Bryan was just slowly emerging from my consciousness. Bryan may have been a "total trip" whatever pain he was in he drowned with alcohol and drugs. I guess I went to a bar he drank several glasses of wine. I was heavily controlling my drinking then by intermittent use of speed and weight medication. Because I wasn't scared of my problem I was in denial of Bryan's. If he had a problem maybe I did too. I was so enrolled with Bryan I gave him a key to my apartment. A week later it looked like the local VA or a mental hospital. Bryan brought his friends to my apartment which was normally tame with a flop house for bums and rundown street people. In one corner sat a self proclaimed Rhodes Scholar with his head covered with a newspaper cherry in his mouth, in a rocking chair a cowboy from Wyoming who proclaimed "He was you

know you don't know, the more you know." This I thought profound at the time. All were welcome. A friend of Bryan's is a friend of mine I said.

Into a Clement woman with a shaved head carried naked around my living room doing a Isadora-Duncan-type entry this she said she said you've been let out of Wood State Mental Hospital. She said she was housekeeper for me for free if I slept with her. I declined. I sat in my apartment one afternoon with all these chaos going on around me, and I wondered how did this Zoo, I came about. A week ago I'd been a fairly contented if not lonely graduate student. I wanted to say to Bryan "Get these lunatics out of my house right now!" But how could I? I thought they were his friends?" Because I cared for him. Bryan did cook for me for the three weeks he was in my apartment — wonderful vegetarian meals. My problem was he almost set the apartment on fire doing a French omelette flambé. It's a wonder we all didn't get burned to a cinder. Why I know why his apartment burned down. Cooking drunk is not a good idea. Friends of mine whom we'd call and glimpse part of the "Looked Word" ~~took me~~ made me promise to throw them all out by the end of the week. The problem was that Bryan's girlfriend Zoe was about to arrive from Berlin. What harm could one more bring do I thought? He told me she was a tightrope walker in the circus. She was about seventeen with long red hair and freckles

One afternoon, I was "alone" with Bryan's "Zoë" to "Zoë," Bryan informs me "will do it with anything." "Sheep goats chickens anything but you." "?" "Zoë" "regardless" Zoë apathy in the care of fascinating cast of characters was added to my collection. I have always been a talent psychologist. I have recently been a volunteer counselor in adventure, drug induced psychosis. I find craziness in all its beauty and wonderful colors, fascinating. Even today I am attracted to highly "eccentric" people. A friend of mine in San Francisco says carry a bag - magnet with me. If we meet for coffee in a crowded café he makes my promise to put the magnet away for the duration of our chat or else. Then, maybe, those people I've encountered on the street will not down and begin a confessional monolog. I am not a shy person, with strangers especially. Hey I think it goes back to growing up in a hotel. I'm not threatened by strangers. A hotel lobby is a controlled environment. Regulars pay and know to behave within certain guidelines. People off the street can do what they like, unless I get tendrils. I often do. I want to be let in. But once in, the problem is, how do I get them out? It's amazing to me that I never got raped. Off by Bryan or any of his cohorts. Eventually of course I did. I give people too much power over me. Yes I am a recovering

Co-dependent as well as alcoholic
Today hopefully I would not allow
or have such chaotic behavior from
the environment observing demo." I have less
friends than before and some ones, supportive
ones. The Bryan Reeves my Appalachian Spring
as I like to call it found me leading a very
schizoid existence. There I was getting
straight A's in grad school at UC Berkeley and
consorting with street people, junkies and
drunks. I used to come home at night
dreading to hear the sound of Bryan's violin
playing with Hall. I would hope he would
take himself off on the road again without
having to have us go through the painful
process of kicking him out. About this time
I heard about the Northern California Student
Playwriting Competition. Prophetically I had written
a three character one-act play about a crazy
man in a Greyhound bus station. Wacky poem,
when at U.C. Davis. The competition was for a
radio play so I adapted it for radio by
substituting sound effects for stage business.
The play "No one at home" was really lost—
even the tape. In the play the crazy
man says about twenty sentences which
are repeated twice as he interacts with the
three other characters. They are waiting for a bus
the bus never comes. The play won
first prize. The judges were graduate students
from the Theatre Department at U.C. Berkeley.
Naturally I decided to give a cast
party at my house to listen to the tape — the
prize was a broadcast of the tape on KPFA
Radio. It was the craziest party I've ever

I put the center of the living room on the couch and with Joe acting as Bryan the cast with myself in my wheelchair completed the circle; at the edge of the room to the left were Bryan and his steel crokes, at the edge of the room on the right my friends from moderate school Joe acting as Bryan set the sequence by reading as we listened to the broadcast. After the play was over there was vigorous applause. Then out came the line, tongue loosened, speech free. I relaxed. "Who are those people?" asked my friend Carol from my fifteen years. "There Bryan's friends." I said. "Who's Bryan?" By this time Bryan was an argument with my friend Tom, a local poet, now an actor in Providence R.I.; someone came up to me and reported Bryan had pulled a knife on Tom and should I call the police. It's a wonder general mayhem did not ensue. People left rather quickly leaving me with Bryan and one or two of his cronies. "You have to know them," the class nurse my best friend Tim. "I know, I whispered, but not well yet." Zoe left for Denver the next day. Bryan then became quite demented and then I could see he was crazy. He began having imaginary conversations with the walls talking with them as if they were Zoe. He picked up the phone without dialing a number and begged Zoe not to leave for Denver. He was speedy. I called the emergency room at Highland hospital. They said he might be withdrawing from acid or coke

the St's. I had seen "The Last Weekend" and knew how dangerous the situation was. I was advised by a doctor at Highland to try to get Bryan into a Detox Unit. I tried the next day but no spaces were available despite my pleadings. Finally Highland agreed to take him in for the night. They said they would then transfer him to Napa State Hospital the next morning if they found him mentally deranged and hopeless. I felt like a traitor as I left him at the hospital. "They can't send me to Napa will they Chris," he pleaded as he hugged me goodbye, "No, No" I said. "You'll just be here for one day. I'll see you soon." "I'll be able to come home to you now, can't I Chris?" he asked like a child. "yes yes of course," I said to placate him. I was deeply moved as I left the hospital by taxi. The last I saw of him, my sweet fiddle playing Pixie was being led away by two male nurses. He was sent to Napa much to my relief. Shortly after this I went home to England for the week's vacation and told my friends how I had met this amazing fiddle player who said "I came out to my friends as a gay man for the first time. None were surprised. As for Bryan I hope he's still alive. He told me once his big ambition was to have a health food store in Denver with a bar. I hope he gets clean and sober, that he gets this wish. I hope he picks up his fiddle now and again.

The First Poem

My first poem, "Evesham, Stratford, 9/9/74" was written in its first draft one day while in England before I left the country. It later developed into a short story. In 1974-75 I was appointed student representative on a committee of the National Union of Students in London. The committee was formed to interview and hire a director of Disabled Student Affairs. As an activist Berkeley I had organized a protest group of disabled students (mostly county) of myself and a girl called Sue Norfolk and a quadriplegic Cockney (from a forced work in Romford). The prejudice against disabled was extreme. I had battled heavily to get into a regular dormitory. Only with the pressure of my occupational therapists from the Royal Marlborough Lodge did the Arts faculty install a ramp. Even the ramp only covers the first two steps of the entrance to the Arts Faculty Building. In those days the attitude of the authorities was "If there's a disabled student who needs to get to classes in a certain building, we'll make it accessible, ignoring the obvious (to us, the disabled) fact that if a building is not accessible students may apply elsewhere. I enclosed the dubious privilege of getting an "audience" with the Vice Chancellor. "He had come up with an "idea" he said. "Why don't we specialise in a different disability each year? For example, this year we could say, encourage disabled people to apply, the next year deaf, the next year blind and so on." The idea was to preferences

that even I in my youthful
togetherness had struck dumb.
I bundled the camping in the late 70's
late 80's. I expected to find ramps
everywhere, automatic doors and so
on. Nothing had changed. One tiny
ramp had been placed to cover the
single step to the student union and
then that had an angle that began
steep for me to negotiate. This is
why I live in an fenced and not in
Eglon where buses, subways and
taxis are totally unacceptable not to
mention countless buildings. The
general level of awareness of disability
over there is thirty years behind us
here.

In my County as elected student
rep at U. N. O. I got to go down to
Lincoln for the weekend one weekend
a month. N.U.S. paid for my train fare
food as I stayed with friends. On September 9th
1974, I met a handsome young man
at the Mayors. He had long silky auburn
hair, a moustache and wore a blue
jacket, purple pants and carried a brown
envelope with his name embossed on it
in gold foil letters. He told me he was
room comfortable, just time going over to
his friend Pat in a wheelchair, Randolph
Spires. I thought he looked pleased
that I made his tea. It was about
to leave the country to go to Greece & Pat
his flat and excitement intensely. This poem
is very regular, at my reading's. Rain my

Oldest poem I can remember
when member of the audience may like it
like here. Have I prepared it
all me eyes? The poem was a book
I had gone ahead of myself in my prose.
The books I wrote at the same time I have
discarded, they were all about Prejudices
& Greed Hatred does to Second Times
I have been picked up three by my mother
on Vacations back home from the States
How I have changed from that timid soul
She left behind Sunday 22 years ago. I was twice
yet aware that my darling deserved of
me something regarded but difficult, having
my Mother, a widow, and no other rely on.
Before I got on the plane at Heathrow
she said prophetically: "you won't come back."
"of course I will, I said "No you won't.
My heart doesn't want you to go but
my head tells me you must. My mother's
a strong generous woman. Not many mother
could I destroyed between here and here
endured circumstances, We have been forced
into a strong closeness, united by a shared
instinct by my father's desertion. It was as
if we both were in the same life boat having
jumped overboard from the ship we once had
the Titanic inevitably struck a disaster by his
own making. After he died we had all in the
lifeboat, no disaster to about except the fear
Loving God after thank God he was generous
enough to let me go as I knew I must. I was
28 with my life ahead of me, in another country.
Mothers dreams always know their children better

than the children grew through
even when they did the adults. Behind
every independent happy disabled
person is the willing to let them a
generous mother who knows how to
encourage, support not over-protect
and to let go when the time comes. I have
been blessed with two of mother. It was
the best when I got to high school
university and could let go when I made
my first major life decision, to go
to America like the young man in
the poem, I too was perfect. I was
perfect in my innocence in my willingness
to let the world make of me what it
would. Of course my mother would always
be there behind me at home to call up
for support and advice. Perhaps I have been
too dependent on her especially financially -
but making one's way in the world as an
artist is tough. As you all do, indeed,
If you have a disability you need all the
help you can get. I came out to my mother
as a gay man at 50, this year in fact.
I had always been afraid to before, especially
having experienced her horror at Chris's
letter. Of course she knew I was gay but it
was being about the letter - the agony of
not knowing whether we had been comforting, talking
around it for a whole. Being homosexual has
many negative connotations even for a
relatively sophisticated woman such as my
mother. As a term, 'gay' male man I am
physically more vulnerable than most people
today. Pain in my mother's eyes

probably for "dirty old men." perverts.
In a sense this is true. I strongly consider
I have a terrible chip on my shoulder. When I
come to men I am a romance addict. I
get attention from a man and invest him with
magical qualities. Men blame him for not
living up to my expectations. I made Bryan
a "mythical genius" — he feels he was, but
his huge "ego" ~~ego~~ led him willingly
to use me as a prop, a support. I don't
get a lot of chances in the relationship
field. I am hardly a gay club. I don't
get any category relating with gays.
Straight friends sometimes say to me
when I complain about having no relationships:
"There must be no gay men who like women
men, get offers then. Who are these men?
Are they nervous or what? Either way I have
with those kind. Two years ago I saw a video
of myself introducing a musical performance of
a scene from an opera for which I had with the
the wheels. A female friend of mine said to me as
we sat and watched the video "you look so
handsome." I take pains to dress. If I met my
guy ask me out I thought (not: What
he wants or for). Not long after seeing the
video I returned to San Francisco where I now live.
I felt a new confidence about my appearance.
I now get carried quite a lot. "Sometimes I stop
and talk to the guy, sometimes I don't. It's hell
to meet someone in a cafe where you have a
chance to talk a bit first. That's how I met
Allan ...

Getting Away with Murder

I was popular at school. I am a great mimic. Mimicry or pompous and ~~the~~ incompetent teachers, made me popular. I was often the doer of pranks in the classroom, if not the instigator. I learnt words long from the regular naughty and often lazy boys at the back. Since I sat in the front row the "news" of a new prank would be passed up to me to carry out of course the danger for me if I got caught and taking the blame for the whole prank and being punished accordingly. A good example of this was the frog episode. A box of coloured chalks was on the teacher's desk. Someone had the idea of putting a frog in the chalk box, covering the box with a piece of cardboard which I was detailed to flick a piece of grass into the box, tilt the frog out, & throw our hero teacher entered with great pomp and ceremony & we had the habit of rising off the table with the noise of his black academic gown before he deigned to place his rather large behind on the table. As he made to take off I was afraid he would detect the chalk box and reveal the frog. Several boys began to giggle behind me. Not having had the years of indoctrination in elementary school the other boys had I was often reprimanded for laughing in class. I simply laughed at the teacher (because I found his pomposity absurd any little they could see of

Italian Sonnets

While rows of boys (who in no
pose for me) looked long and hard
I tried to hold the laughter in my
lobbying nose. The notion of shelly or
not the frog would appear (or smoke) lured
me off task, heard me suppress a guffaw
"Now, Heidi, what exactly do you find
so comical?" "Nothing sir," I sputtered through
my nuzzles, "you're making a big deal
about nothing then I come to be corrected
pursed your for nothing. May I rely on you
to keep quiet while I talk about the
Corn Laws today?" "Yes sir" I squeezed
out, my eyes on the chalk box. Moreley,
the frog prank instigator nudged me from
behind. This was my regret to throw the
gravel into the chalk box. I curled a clean
till Mr O. put on his reading glasses and
began. Yet the door creaked. My
arm compelled. The race of gravel dropped
into the box, shuttle cock covered to
conceal leaving a trail of more for the
frog to creep. Immediately he popped up
his face above the edge of the box, front
feet clutching the edge. He looked a frog
over above to get a scene from the play.
He is about and to the left of Mr O's hand
which perused the work. This drew him completely
I sputtered a repressed guffaw of regret
mouthed. I made a short list of grisly
noises. The frog blinked at me. Then arose
with tones to blink at Mr O. ~~the whole front~~
~~of him was flat for~~ who was completely
engaged in his reading and unaware of what the frog

on. He heard a menacing finger of me. Hardt, please!" The rest of on another boat of working the remembers Friday. Mr. O that Ged Wetterick the room as Mr. the English master came. Yes. He sat down at his desk where Mr. O had got Pierre Hedrich from his thought of his form Professor Up off the shelf for us and the frog hopping robustly off Hodeck with the gear up and he started Mr. then he began happily arguably clamour between the boys. O Hedrich repeating laughter for Mr. O at the point that the record hung (Mr. O) repeated merges resulted in a bad headache by my nose. My desktop [illegible] books. Queen in Mrs. O [illegible] with old room. Now O no longer needed to repeat the laughter. O gave in to my hysteria, the motor [illegible] my uncontrollable state, Sodes a bowl of cold water and plastered another [illegible] face with it. This dastly Irish, O sat up immediately. O had to see Mr. O later in the day to hand in a poker and explain him of the frog business. He seemed to have no idea that he was there. He gave me a very mild however. Perhaps he knew after all. O was never in trouble for laughing again. Since O was the head in school, O got away with such incidents. My head subject was chemistry. Mr. Chemistry master was Mr. Hodgson an elderly bald, Irish man with a red face. Once

I didn't make it clear. He came up behind me and whispered in my ear. Rabbi stood up to say his invocation. It was a crack Mr. P didn't produce in my skull. After the benediction I announced to a group of boys "I hope Mr. Rodgers dies dear. The nosey nanny a robert. Nobody answered, merely "I am deeply sorry to have to tell you that Mr. Belonis Chemistry master Mr. Rodgers died of a heart attack last night. A recorded hear rose from the boys. I shrugged my hand "okay, Hewitt now come to news of the day. Little note yesterday night on the door by the end of the week. Thus I did not dog the fuses relying I had super natural powers. Not feel bad about Mr. P. I enjoy hate him. He once made Bates, a particularly cheeky boy, wear at dunce's cap and kneel down at the front of the class and say the Our Father. He also enjoyed using the cane. Copied Compound pneumatic powder with several months, Bates was considerably more subdued he would provoke matters into beating him. The day he sat for O' level German, he took a cigarette lighter and set fire to the question. Bates who was a border despises Mr. Clapham and one night urinated on the middle of the playing field. He made a complaint and Mr. Clapham was engaged in a fortnight. He was also bullied by Mr. Hewitt he used to take a frequency Rolls at University Salmon was bored but Rules was positively Mr. Irene

Way to escaping the fact that
we had on the Ghod Terribly terrible
that it was a terrible school but
that was no reason to neglect-distract.
I drew Comfort for Mr. D. but I Brew I
could get by without chemistry. I was
never having "Cyphered to death" a teacher there
subject I like or Chop I despise,
Luckily for me my favorite teacher taught
the subjects I took up. The boy only
gave me a hard time once. Just before 6
levels I started to come top of my class in
every subject. Remember I drew Mr. My
mother did my homework. The hard time
Uncle did help me especially Mon
the teachers kept us. We were told we could
study for 'o' level later at school in the
library on our own. I detested the later years
the worthy Miss Norwood for class grocery,
I I could study at home since I like
doesby. He agreed, I came to school a
few days later to take an 'o' level in only
subject. Class boys indeed my
friends Board pulled me by without shedding.
They had "remote chemistry. I know I
remember that several of the projects who
meeting with the later made to discuss the
boys protest over my being allowed to study at
home. I decided to go to the Mr. Cross
(the Latin master) office to listen in on the
conversation. I heard my form Board saying
"to home fair else see." Mr. Cross then
replies "we all know that Kenneth can get
angry with murder." I knew he was
referring to my last fight that I was

doubles. I have never in my life felt so desolate and alone. That night My mother came to pick me up in a car. She lifted me out of the car as well as a small minded full of my books. I remember that Christmas + good deal of letters. For Lynch Duffies underwear in drops and I felt a sear pain in my left leg and heard something snap. ~~I then fractured~~ Lefty Clark "You're broken my leg" I said to her cruelly. I was right Lynch & I had to have three to hospital. I felt three months in bed. I never did get to take the bath with the other boys. My friend Daryl did come to visit me in bed but he would die look at me. I was ~~I~~ approaches way of Christmas time to come to see me. We still had dances together for a while Frank for a couple of years but our friendship has died. I was forgave him for organizing the boycott against me. I felt betrayed. I then ~~for~~ ~~to do quite well at this~~ with the other boys for me to do well but not better than they ~~exactly~~ when future academic careers ~~were~~ at stake. They were considered all the days I had been absent nearly years with ~~conditions~~ or problems Chantley could go to school. I then got helped because of absences as had to work twice as hard to catch up Today probably I would have been able to get rid of the tension I was ~~pressured~~. I never was able to defend myself in such situation. Now I did I have the guts to burst into that room and ~~said~~ "Yankee I can get away with murder and I'm going to murder all of ya right now" or ~~some~~ ~~other~~ ~~words~~ ~~but~~ ~~then~~ I was angry enough to frighten

they say Merces is the best revenge. I do go on to University and get my degree and get Graduate degrees in the country.

When I didn't receive the prizes I deserved and the English teacher said "it wouldn't look good," I think now as I write this he meant, that it wouldn't look good in the eyes of the boys. He wanted to know that I was standing up for me their star student at the time. Those few weeks I came top of the class I felt not elated but serene. It was an unfamiliar feeling, a feeling I have been able to recapture in retrospect, a feeling that everything is as it should be, everything is alright. Each month at the beginning of the month the headmaster read monthly marks. Each boy was ranked with his classmates. Since there were except in the sixth form about forty boys in each class the best you could be was first and the tenth the lowest, below ten you were not it seems worth mentioning. Each master also told us where we had come in each individual subject. Here the whole class was included. The months I came first repeatedly were in 1961-2. I remember arriving at the school entrance one particular "monthly marks day." One of the boys I'd asked to meet me at the front door to tell me the results which always leaked out ahead of time. I leant out of the car window and asked jokingly "Where did I come?" "Oh, first, Lord the boy offhandedly; 'as expected' he mimicked my high tone. This was about the time or

fourth month in a row I had come top
At last I got the reward for my hard work.
Even if it was only a placement in a set.
A marvellous feeling of calm came over me.
I was proud of myself. The system perhaps the
worst as unfair as I had thought. Later in the
day I found out my marks in each subject.
My father asked me my results, I told him
I had come first in every subject even arrogantly
physics, except for Maths. "And where did you
come in Maths?" he asked. "Twenty eighth I said
"Then you're an idiot," he sneered back at
me and stormed out slamming the door heading
for the pub. I knew I wasn't an idiot so
rather than taking my self esteem from his
opinion of me, what I got was the fact that
however bright you were, however hard you
tried, grown-ups, and especially the one I would
most like to please most in all the world
could find in my mother never praised you. In
my following O and A level exams I experienced
panic which intensified at the University exams.
Looking back, Daddy obviously wanted me to
do not just well but perfectly. Maths was
the subject he was brilliant at. I wonder had I
come first in Maths and twenty-eighth in class
overall, if he could have blamed the grading system
or the school? My mother was not concerned
to much as to why I came in class. It's not that
she didn't care, her attitude was, more robustly
that "just do your best and accept the result
wholeheartedly." Of course she was proud of me
when I came top. His double edged attitude to
my success was very confusing to me. I had
I had struggles already with Maths and neglect, the

Other subjects I liked were Eng Lit, French as a second language, & Phonics (learning how subjects work & how to follow). I hated Math at this point that I was basically a creative person & not very good at "academic" type stuff. I never liked math & there was no math in my creative life. My mom was pretty supportive of my writing all the time. I'm sure she'd tell you I didn't take creative writing classes because I didn't need them. I wasn't until I took creative writing courses (Poetry and fiction) at U.C. - Berkeley 1976-78 that I again got straight A's. Through creative writing programs now - there's problems & usually I'd get degrees in something I loved to do. One of the drawbacks of being clear is that you can do; can't study many subjects. This doesn't bother me, and you have to decide. But for me at this stage, I saw no alternative, no other way away from home outside "real" world than to take a degree in the arts. Writing comes so easily to me that it never seems like work to me - rewriting & revising is a joy. When I get stopped for it, I feel I can, get away with murder. Instead I've become a writer.

Fireman's hard steps

I've never had a great desire to walk. It's the preoccupation of most ambulatory people (that's what I call them "ambies" for short) that people in wheelchairs want constantly with they could walk. I don't. Oh it's annoying not being able to hurry especially when I'm late for the bus or the subway. If I had a chair I could put into overdrive I could. Before my chair I could perhaps move a chair faster to make up time. But there was always some long-legged guy who ran by me. If I didn't have wheels walking would resemble a dervish spin, but when you know that you can't go, you learn to enjoy other things. Besides if you keep your head or lose your neck, even the idea of running makes you shudder. Sometimes I do fantasize about getting in a magical way. Like Tinkerbell in Peter Pan I'd fly on the wind and alighty there I'd choose. I'm not a poem "There are Times"

The only time I did attempt to walk, I did so as the result of pressure from grown ups. Mr. Chescoe, the man who ran the rest home our house was over with his wife. He got it into his head that he could help me walk by making a pair of crutches for me. Even though they fitted me well, I was so scared of slipping I didn't walk more than a couple of tremulous steps. At age 2 who I made the steps of a two year old. Realizing that the crutches did not give me enough support, my parents arranged

for a walking frame tailored to my height. Because of my mother's and the neighbor's encouragement I began to get around. I could walk with small steps with the frame which has two small rear wheels on the front. But I almost tipped over many times and eventually gave up the battle. Eventually I went to Birmingham where, through connections of my father, a hard-made wooden chair was made for me. This I used all through high school. Today I was given a sparkling new fully customized chair from the government. It's a Power Wheelchair Quickie. Currently I have a full size (adult) motorized chair. I called it R2Tonka Like an armored tank or all-terrain automobile it goes me a lot of protection. Rolls like a turtle in its shell I can get around safely and without fear. In 1993, I was hit by a car. Even the chair did not save me, with two batteries and its motor the Tonka is very heavy. I got away with a bruised hip. I do have an orange flag attached to the chair so motorists can see me. Otherwise I suffered my sentence.

The Painter's Son

My mother's a painter I tell my friends proudly; and so she is. She considers herself an amateur although she usually sells ten or twelve paintings a year. They are often breathtakingly beautiful and she values her own work more; she's never had a one-woman show. She used to offer me her landscapes for free, but if you praise one of her paintings or a sketch, she will point out its defects, or rather what she thinks are its defects, then sorely-afflicting sometimes, she wishes me to scream. A friend cried out of this however. He said, "Does your mother like you? Wait for your mother to die. Then you will love your self-loathing obsessive. Her paintings are her salvation." Oh how true this is. She loves to paint. Painting has kept her going through dark grim years when she suffered under the cold hysteria of schizophrenia, my own traumas will not kill the bees. It is her spiritual center. I am proud of her. I have saved all her paintings. She teaches a small class painting classic landscapes on Wednesdays.

My mother was something of a child prodigy. When I was about sixteen she told me that she had written a few hundred pages of a novel about twins living in Cornwall when she was nine years old. When she was fourteen she sold her first two student paintings, one of the Tate and the other of Kew Gardens. Her paintings were shown on the front page of The Times. At seventeen she was offered a scholarship to Oxford University for when she was sixteen. But at sixteen her

father died and my grandmother being now a widow depended that my mother stay home and look after her. In 1932 the [illegible] were commonly stayed home with mother. I believe from my mother could more appreciate art than my grandmother. Though painting was a nice hobby for my mother. About twenty years ago my mother sent one of her lovely oil paintings of the Malvern Hills to my aunt in Canada. When my mother visited my aunt there she found the painting hanging in the toilet. No one took my mother's work seriously enough to be hurt. The point is she has created many lovely works of art of a high standard. One of these hangs in [illegible] apartment in Tuscany, the apartment of my ex-lover Allan. He's very fond of the painting. It's of spring sunlight filtering through sycamore trees — a world of delicacy and exquisite delicacy she sent it to me as an Easter Card the previous year. I had it framed for Allan. I'm glad it's his. It will be a memory of me. I wished they could have met before I broke up with him. I think they would have liked each other.

My mother has helped me more than she knows — by never losing over-protective, by encouraging me to go out into the world to see and have the career I wanted — that of the writer, by true worthy by making the road of an artist an effortless

of beauty; friends say my poems are very visual. In fact I write a lot about paintings. (Most of Tao-chi poems).

My mother dies a lonely pen and ink drawing for the cover of my chapbook of poems, The Cornell Boys. When people praise the poems in the book, I say "Yes and the cover's cool, isn't it nice, anyway." Again a kind friend reprimands me. "Chris, just say thanks, okay. Don't be so self-effacing." You're right I say; you're, as usual, so full of wisdom. By writing this book I'm hoping to lay to rest the self-effacement of the child in the family. By writing this book I'm saying "I write, therefore I am. Take it or leave it, it's my truth, it's my statement." I'm saying you can have Bill Bonney and shoot your dream. And I will. And I have.

My first attempts at poetry were written when I was about twelve. One I was about a sailing ship Crossing the Atlantic to the States, the other about a petrified forest in Oregon. The first I think came from seeing an old print of a sailing ship in a magazine the second from books or films I'm not sure. The Petrified Forest" with Bette Davis and Leslie Howard based on the play by Robert Sherwood. Both had left their early efforts & I don't remember a line often I have found that my poems are prophetic. When I was never been to Arizona, except briefly through one corner of it on the Greyhound bus I did cross the Atlantic by plane / liner years later. I had no conscious desire to go West but I must have felt a pull. There is an excitement and freedom here that never fails to inform me. Here if you have initiative, of any kind, you can find support for it (except if it's political) whereas in or the feeling is you may be getting too "big for your boots", not "know your place or having ideas above your station" as my grandmother (maternal) used to put it - ideas about yourself. I had an intimation that I'd go West I knew but that I would have to wait a long time - the forest was petrified and probably I was too. When I got on the plane to New York at Heathrow Oct 2nd 1972 I'd never been on a plane before, never been abroad. I was embarking on the future stage of the journey of my life.

CDH I

Salcombe - batrides, Raddy, Golden Stone
The Bolt Head. Combe Cottage.

Moonlight Sonata

Before going up to University, I went to a rehabilitation Center for disabled people called the Royal Marlborough Lodge in Oxford. It's a branch of the Nuffield Orthopedic Hospital. It's the least hospital-like place I've been in. It's part of a hospital, in 1967, all the nurses were beautiful Scandinavian girls with blonde hair. They were warm, friendly and even flirtatious. Has I been straight I would have undoubtedly fallen in love. I did fall in love once happened but with a man, my room-mate Roger.

Roger Webster was a quadriplegic from a village near Norwich in Norfolk. He was a big burly guy with a dazzling smile and twinkly grey eyes. He was the first man I ever touched, deliberately I mean. I plotted my act. I knew that moving his body he'd only noticed feeling it if I found an opportunity to touch him somewhere non-sexually I decided I'd ask him if he could feel anything. One day he was sitting in his chair reading a magazine. I couldn't resist his strong brown arm covered with long blond hairs. I ran my finger up and down part of his arm. He never even looked up at me. I got out the words "Can you feel me do that?" I was afraid he would yell at me for a moment but he simply smiled sweetly and said "Not really." I kept quiet. So you can't touch a man even a straight man without the world crashing down on you. Roger was very princely in his manner and not for a country boy. I He played casual

a recording of Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata," every evening on the record player in the lounge. As he listened tears would come to his eyes and he would say "Lovely isn't it?"

Roger plunged with the nurses extravagantly & would get extra medicine only if he got a hold on the nurse would say for a nurse "Nurse, nurse come quick, I'm now of mine." One of the Dutch beauties would arrive, red to the roots & she would blush "Oh, Mr. Rogers you are terrible!" We usually talk late into the night. I was afraid to tell him I was going, but he told me about his old girlfriends. He had been engaged a year at the time of the accident. She never heard from her after he was paralyzed. Asked him if there was any girlfriends since then. He told me about Stella Mandeville, the famous pilot for Woods and Jones had proposed to him. He had turned her down because he said he didn't want to be a burden to her. "You wouldn't be a burden to anyone, Roger," I said "Besides, if she loved you—" "He felt silent

Beethoven played in the background, I wanted to hug him, kiss him and tell him I loved him, but in those days, such a thing especially with a stranger was unthinkable. I was very moved by Peggy's story. "He should have had physiotherapy

following the accident. Even today in England he might not have received the world class treatment and medication for post-traumatic stress and psychological as well as physical rehabilitation. Roger has withdrawn from the world since the accident. He was only 27 years old. Roger was a birdwatcher. One day three years earlier he'd been on a walk with a friend. He had spotted a cardinal in a tree in a field. He climbed a five-barred gate to get a better look at the bird. The wood on the gate was rotten and the whole thing collapsed under him, throwing him on his back. The friend came over and told him to stop play-acting and get up. He couldn't get up and however hard he tried to, at the time of the accident he was in such terrible pain. Now-deceased. "That's all over now," he said. "I can only just pick up a pencil, never mind draw with it." "Why don't you go back to school and become a teacher?" I asked. "You're very bright and articulate. You'd be a great teacher." "I've had my day," he shook his head. Roger gained every optimistic suggestion I had. Now I realize he was severely depressed, then I just couldn't understand his attitude. He had so much going for him - charm, good looks, intelligence, wit. He could have gone back to the world after regaining Roger for new challenges etc. They'd come for him to Norwich in a truck with a three-wheeler mobility car which he never liked. As I waved him goodbye I felt I'd never see him again. For years I'd come across for three years. I may have been

his only close friend. In the meantime I was having struggles with finals at University and was caught up in school life with other friends & the writing to him. Three months later my mother received a letter from Roger's mother telling her Roger had died & all she could tell. He had had a severe pulmonary infection (common with AIDS) and the doctors were trying to put in a catheter & bag to replace his bladder. In the letter his mother said "I can't help feeling Roger just gave up. He didn't want to live." Naturally I felt terribly guilty. Perhaps I thought I had abandoned him. If only he could have reached out to me, before... "Now I know that guilt is a symptom" of bereavement. I was determined never to give up like Roger after my third year age I gave up for eight months, but all along I went to my therapist and to AIDS support meetings & came through my crisis. Roger wasn't a weak person. He was strong by nature, strong, warm and loving. He could have come through, if he could right help, I believe. He was the first friend of my adult life. We had a good time. I still talk to him sometimes. I thank him for trusting me for loving me. He made me feel special, worthy of the good life he never had himself. This book is dedicated to him. He is a reminder that life is

precious and that no matter what the
affection I ever felt for him, he
I must do can go on for the sake of myself
and others. By withdrawing from the world Roger
deprived the use of his beautiful spirit, his
moonlight sonatas, the masterpiece that
was his family.

Ever since Roger died I have looked for
a way to commemorate him. I have
long since forgotten and lost his parents
address. In any case they are probably
dead by now. He had six brothers all married.
Other than his family and a few friends
no one alive now will remember him.
I wonder if the girl next door left him or
the snobs turned down Unit 9 for him?
Forever he is fixed in my mind's eye as he
was leaving to Reethven, misty-eyed,
staring off into the distance, remembering
no doubt his pre-disabled self
- the enemy jock with a passion for
birds, and girls with blonde hair,
freckled cheeks and blue eyes.

The Hills

Just after I was born, my mother, my aunt and my grandmother decided together to start a hotel. My grandmother was originally from Herefordshire and had a hankering for the countryside round there. Methodist preachers and brought a seventeenth-century farmhouse called Holdfast Cottage in the village of Upper Wellard in Worcestershire. Here I spent the first eight years of my life. The hotel has a marvellous view of the entire ten mile-long range of the Malvern Hills which rise up unfeasibly high above the valley which is a few hundred feet above sea level. The hills are almost two thousand feet; a person from Kansas would call them mountains. On these bare grassy hills Elgar walked and rode getting inspiration for his orchestral pieces. Whenever I hear Elgar, especially the Enigma Variations, I immediately see Alice's pony, and the Symphonies I feel the ache of homesickness for the hills. It is here that Piers Plowman looks down on the valley below and sees the field full of folk in Langland's allegory. It is said that from the top of the Worcestershire Beacon you can see nine counties. The hills are easily accessible for a wheelchair. I often went "for a walk" in my stroller or later on my wheelchair on the hills, if not to the top of the highest peak where the walking becomes too dangerous and rocky. You look down on a patchwork quilt of fields and edges with hedgerows, some bright yellow with wheat or oats, some red with clay soil, some green with grass, and fruit trees, some cypress trees, some triangles, some diamonds. Dotted amongst the fields are occasional cottages - thick with thatched roofs,

the occasional Church spire. There's always a breeze up on the hills, you can hear the breezes in the sweep of Elgar's music. There's a rodness to the landscape too, a kind of emptiness. No wonder Housman talked of "the Lad Shires" in his poems. From up there you can look across the Valley to Burton Hill and the Cotswolds beyond and on a clear day with good binoculars you might even see the "dreaming towers" of Oxford. I rarely get homesick, but after a few days I crave the green without any hope, Elgar's music starts to come with my head with an [illegible] and I climb the hills from [illegible] and below them, [illegible] on my mind's eye, dusty, echoing rooms of childhood is upon me. I feel like crying.

Suddenly, realize I am seven thousand miles away, ~~by plane twelve hours~~ and yet no nearer on I know than three or four days later I'm anxious to leave.

Meet "Sunday Evening in the Hall"

I need an infusion, a reaffirmation of the Nativity the continuance the age of Britain so I know it's always all there waiting for me, just as when I was living there I waited for me to begin

Meet "Home" already?

The silence is so deep that you hear it scream.

Chasing Rainbows John Fantasy
Dos Hebrant

Hope and Glory (friendship)

Hitting Bottom (Dads and Mom)

You say Tomato (language problems)

Café Society I, II, III

Café Flore. Origins of Café addiction.

Growing up in a hotel, I was so used to meeting strangers and talking to them that whatever shyness I experienced at first soon disappeared. The "visitors" became my audience. I would crawl up to a table in the dining room or a family sitting in the lounge and tell them stories. I would do impressions of some of the guests, careful always to avoid mimicking those at present staying in the hotel. I have always had the ability to make people laugh. Friends say I should be a "natural comic." But my humor is spontaneous. It's time I can reduce a table full of people in a restaurant to helpless hysterical laughter. Several criteria have to coincide before this happens. They do need to be good friends with whom I feel relaxed. I need to be in a good mood, and I have to sense the moment to "perform" for the "right" one. In my drinking days of course a bottle of wine would have

oiled the wheels (harden the pun).
In those days my humor was often cruel and at other people's expense. Sometimes it could be unpleasant and embarrassing. I cringe when I remember I did a quick but accurate impression of someone having a grand mal seizure. My friends all thought this was hysterical but the story was totally untrue. One of the joys of being sober is that I don't feel I have to be "on" whenever I'm with friends. I can be amusing for five minutes and then let someone else take over. I don't need the 5 hour day now. I no longer want to be the center of attention everywhere I go. I much rather be alone "holding court" at the Café Flore in the Seventies. I had a bad day like that, I would feel sorry for me. I used desperately to be funny, witty to behold. Now people like me when I say very little. Of course I'm a natural born listener but I prefer to keep my ears divided to the stage and keep to the lines of someone else's script. I've learned to listen. I used to think people liked me only because I was amusing. Now people like me for who I am - sometimes a good listener, a kind friend, a good audience, a friend among friends, and among those not to be trusted or more dazzling than the rest, well, except for one or two.

The Long Grasses

It wasn't until I went to the Grammar School when I was eleven that I heard of Oscar Wilde. When you consider that the Wilde Scandal had occurred only fifty years earlier, it is hardly surprising that any boy suspected of being a "homo" was called "Oscar" or "an Oscar." and teased about his gayness. I was careful never to talk about sex, gay or straight. Possibly many of the boys assumed that I either couldn't or didn't have sex because I was in a wheelchair. Being friendly and democratic by nature some of them insisted that I look at pictures of naked women with large breasts. These disturbed and embarrassed me. I think I was afraid that I might find them attractive. Then what would happen to my "difference," my little secret that I treasured so much? I wished I were gay. I was so different from the other boys in every other way on account of my limp, my status and my disability, and though I didn't know it then, because of my "artistic" temperament, that my "gayness somehow justified, (legitimized) my other differences. I was a tiny fragile gay artist-to-be surrounded by straight large able bodied conventional boys. Other than the fact that I was also white and spoke the same language, I was about as different from them as I could be.

It was a sweet and precious thing. I was different and that was all right. Not long after the incident with Mr. Smart and the table, there was a broadcast of a famous circus from the Continent on BBC TV. One of the big acts was a pair of jugglers, a husband and wife. The woman was wearing a bikini and the man a close-fitting sequin jacket and a bow-tie. He had an impressive moustache. The next day Mr. Smart asked me whether I had seen the jugglers. When I said I had, he exclaimed, "Wasn't the woman in the bikini gorgeous?" "M'm," I answered. I was shocked. To me it was the man who was gorgeous not the woman. That clinched it; no I was different for sure. For the first time I felt the pain and isolation of being gay. I wished I could have sung by Mr. Smart's liking the woman. Mr. Smart, it turned out, liked women a little too much. Soon after this he asked my mother if she would give him painting lessons. He suggested they go painting out of doors in the fields next to his house. My mother refused. I asked her why and she said, "I don't think just painting is what he has in mind." "What does he have in mind?" I asked. "Well it isn't painting," she repeated cryptically. It wasn't till I was an Undergraduate at University that I realised Mr. Smart had "designs" on my mother. Not long after I went away to University the scandal of Mr. Smart broke in the local papers. He had been discovered in flagrante with a local married woman by the woman's husband. What was

even worse was that she had been prostituting herself to a number of local men several of them, like Mr. Smart, pillars of Upton social life. Poor Mr. Smart who had an excellent reputation as a teacher was fired from his school. His life was in ruins, his wife divorced him. Eventually time heals his wounds, he got his job back and his reputation was restored. Many years later, when I was in graduate school at Birmingham University, Mr. Smart told my mother he would like to drop in to see me for a chat on one of my weekend visits home. It was an awkward meeting. He must have known I knew about the scandal. He looked old and worried. He wasn't very handsome anymore. Meanness had taken its toll on his features — his face had many wrinkles, he was thinner, his hair had turned grey. I was startled by his strong Worcestershire accent. Somehow because of his aristocratic bearing (as I remember it) and the fact that I had worshipped him, so much as a child, I expected him to have an Upper-middle class accent. Nowadays I suppose Mr. Smart might have sought help from a twelve step program such as Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous though I doubt there are such meetings in Upton-on-Severn. The very idea would be too shocking. I still don't see what is so terrible about having found in bed with a prostitute, but in a school village in England such a thing was enough to ruin a

GLC 67
Hewitt

Notebook [Autobiography], undated [199-?]

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